

I. Identifying factors incompatible with diligence

There are two factors that are incompatible with diligence.

- (1) The first factor refers to not wanting to pursue practice despite knowing that one is able to practice, and that the result is both attainable and worthwhile. It is a type of laziness and can be further divided into two types.
 - (1.1) The first type is the laziness of procrastination, which deliberately postpones practice.
 - (1.2) The second type does not refer to procrastinating practice but to not engaging in practice due to being overwhelmed by attachment to inferior and common activities in pursuit of wealth, praise, fame, and so forth. This type of laziness is the laziness of adhering to negative actions.
- (2) The second factor that is incompatible with diligence is another form of laziness – the laziness of discouragement. It means that even though one has understood that the result is attainable and worthwhile one feels fainthearted and discouraged about being able to practice, thinking, "How can I practice?" It is a mental factor that belittles and discourages oneself by way of self-contempt.

Shantideva says in his *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds (Bodhisattvacharyāvatāra)*:

*The factors incompatible with diligence are said to be
Laziness adhering to the unwholesome,
Procrastination, and self-contempt.*

It is important to understand that laziness in this context does not merely refer to the unwillingness to work or to make an effort but to any mental factor that primarily prevents or discourages the experience of joy in performing wholesome actions.

There is also a third factor that is incompatible with diligence: it refers to never even considering whether the result is attainable. However, the *Lam Rim Chenmo* does not explain this third hindrance because here the factors that are incompatible with diligence are presented from the point of view of practitioners who have reflected on Buddhist results, and who are basically motivated to follow the practices that lead to liberation or enlightenment.

Shantideva says that there are four causes of laziness:

*Laziness arises from the craving for
Indolence, for experiencing the taste of pleasure,
For Sleep, and [it arises from] the lack of disenchantment
With the sufferings of Samsara.*

Therefore, the causes of laziness are the craving for engaging in negative actions, the craving for experiencing ordinary happiness, the craving for sleep, and the absence of a mind that wants to overcome Samsara. Regarding the latter, we lack renunciation for Samsara due to our attachment to the five aggregates, etc.

II. Employing the methods to eliminate the incompatible factors

There are three methods to eliminate the incompatible factors – each method relating to stopping one of the three types of laziness:

- 1) Stopping the laziness of procrastination
- 2) Stopping the attachment to non-virtuous actions
- 3) Stopping discouragement or self-contempt

1) Stopping the laziness of procrastination

This laziness refers to not wanting to engage in Dharma practice right now (despite understanding its necessity) since there are other activities that seem more important. It is based on the notion that we will always have the opportunity to practice the Dharma in the future. Therefore, the antidotes to this type of laziness are meditation on death and on the fact that after this life we might not be reborn with a precious human body that possesses certain freedoms and opportunities, but in an unfortunate and miserable state.

Regarding meditation on death, here we need to reflect on the fact that we are definitely going to die, that the time of death is uncertain, and that at the time of death only Dharma practice can benefit us.

2) Stopping the attachment to unwholesome actions

The second method refers to stopping the laziness that adheres to or is attached to unwholesome and meaningless actions. Such laziness is the result of attachment merely for the happiness of this life. For those merely concerned with the happiness of this life, sensual gratification is often regarded to be the highest type of pleasure. In order to obtain this type of pleasure they engage in numerous different meaningless and unwholesome actions, thereby becoming too distracted to engage in meaningful practice and creating the causes for much unwanted future suffering. This type of laziness can be counteracted by reflecting on the consequences of engaging in meaningless and unwholesome actions, and on the nature of lasting happiness.

Shantideva says in his ***Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds (Bodhisattvacharyāvatāra)***:

*How could you abandon the source of infinite joy,
The highest of pleasures, the sublime teaching,
And delight in distractions and amusements
That are the causes of suffering?*

3) Stopping discouragement or self-contempt

Having overcome the laziness of procrastination and the laziness that adheres to unwholesome actions, we now need to make an effort to become a Mahayana practitioner. However, one of the hindrances to Mahayana practice is the laziness of discouragement or self-contempt, thinking, "Someone like me is unable to engage in such practices."

This has three parts:

- a) Stopping discouragement about the goal
- b) Stopping discouragement about the means to attain the goal
- c) Stopping discouragement because wherever you are is a place to practice

a) Stopping discouragement about the goal

Since all sentient beings have the same potential, everyone will eventually attain the state of a Buddha. Therefore, there is no reason to think that we are incapable to become enlightened. Having such a negative attitude about ourselves is particularly dangerous if we have taken the Bodhisattva vows, for we lose Bodhicitta when we think that we cannot attain Buddhahood.

Shantideva says in his ***Engaging in the Bodhisattva deeds (Bodhisattvacharyāvatāra)***:

*"How could I attain enlightenment?"
I shall not indulge in such discouragement,
For the truth-declaring Tathagara
Has spoken this truth:

"Even flies, mosquitoes,
Bees, and worms will attain
Unsurpassed enlightenment, so hard to attain,
Once they generate the power of perseverance."

Why should someone like me –
Born into the human race, recognizing benefit and harm –
Not attain enlightenment,
As long as I do not give up the Bodhisattva deeds.*

The Buddha teaches in the ***Cloud Jewel Sutra (Ārya Ratnamegha Sutra)*** that we should counteract the feeling of discouragement by thinking about the countless sentient beings that have previously practiced the Bodhisattva path and attained enlightenment. A thousand Buddhas are said to appear in this eon, and they are merely *founding* Buddhas, i.e. Buddhas who reintroduce the Buddhist teachings after they have disappeared in this world.

